

Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

DEC 18 2008

SINCE 1877

NOV 11, 2008

VOL. 132

NO. 47

MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

Blessing of Hunt held at Goss Church

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

A little over five years ago, the members of Goss Church near Columbia began to pray for God to show them a unique ministry to take the Gospel to the unreached in their community. He answered in a big way.

"We felt led to do something with hunters," said Mark McArthur, Goss Church pastor. "Hunting is very popular around here and we thought, 'They have the Blessing of the Fleet down on the Gulf Coast, so why don't we have a 'Blessing of the Hunt'?"

"The first Blessing of the Hunt five years ago drew about 200 people. The next year, 300 people came. By the fourth year, we had 600 people in attendance and 20 decisions. This year, over 800 people came and we recorded 53 decisions," McArthur said.

The Blessing of the Hunt has been held each year in the gym of the church's Family Life Center, which was packed to overflowing on November 13. "We have a lot of our church folks who attend, but we want to keep this an evangelistic outreach so we stress that members should invite their neighbors and friends who don't go to church. We don't want this to turn into a church social," McArthur said.

McArthur said he is not aware of another Blessing of the Hunt in the state. "I know there are quite a few churches that have wild game dinners and events like that, and those are good ideas, but I don't know of another Blessing of the Hunt," he said.

Program personalities over the years have included Mississippi entertainer and outdoors enthusiast Paul Ott; Magnolia



STANDING ROOM ONLY — Mark McArthur, pastor of Goss Church near Columbia, speaks to the packed house assembled in the gym of the church's Family Life Center for the fifth annual Blessing of the Hunt on November 13. The unique event has grown to the point that next year's Blessing will be moved to the 3,000-seat Expo Center in Columbia. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

Outdoors, a drama team that performs hunting skits; Ben Willoughby, outdoors writer for the Hattiesburg American newspaper; and for the past two years, Gary Miller, an outdoors speaker and former Tennessee Baptist pastor.

The 2009 program will include Jason Cruise, founder and president of the Outdoor Ministry Network and an author who has been published by B&H Publishing Group at LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.

McArthur, the longtime pastor and, prior to that, music minister at the church, said a large majority of Goss Church members are involved each year in the Blessing. The church has about 100-115 people in Sunday School each Sunday, and more than 100 of them were involved in some way with this year's event.

"There is a spirit of unity and joy in the church that is absolutely necessary for an event like this to be successful in reaching the unchurched. We couldn't put this on if we weren't united about reaching people in this area for Christ," McArthur said.

Handling a crowd as large as the one at this year's Blessing of the Hunt requires a massive effort. The church's lighted sports field was turned into a parking lot, and that required church members who to serve as parking lot attendants. Multiple sign-in tables were set up at the entrance to the gym, where church members distributed evangelistic tracts, programs, decision cards, and other materials.

The church's Baptist Women provided enough jambalaya — the spicy, rice-based Louisiana dish — to feed the crowd. Other church members served as a setup and take-down crew. Other jobs large and small, too numerous to mention, were also handled by church members.

One attraction that had people from as far away as Baton Rouge lining up at the door hours before the event began were the outdoors and hunting vendors who brought their wares to the Blessing and donated over 100 door prizes.

"We are very appreciate of all the vendors who contributed so much to the success of the Blessing this year," McArthur said.

It also didn't hurt that a four-day hunt in Illinois and a muzzleloader rifle were given away in drawings, with the top prize being a Chuckwagon side-by-side all terrain vehicle.

McArthur said the event has grown to the point that a decision has been made to book the 3,000-seat Expo Center in Columbia for the 2009 Blessing of the Hunt.

"We've caught a vision to expand this into an all-day event with exhibitors, demonstrations, training sessions, and other items, then we would finish with the evening Blessing of the Hunt. We hope to do that at some point in the near future.

"It's amazing to see what God can do when His people allow Him to work in their lives and through His church," McArthur said. "We're thrilled and humbled to be used of God in this special way. The whole purpose is to bring honor to Christ and be used by Him, and we give Him all the glory."



SUPPER IS SERVED — As part of the Blessing of the Hunt held at Goss Church near Columbia on November 13, the church's Baptist Women coordinated the serving of jambalaya to the standing room only crowd that showed up for the fifth annual event. Estimated attendance topped 800 this year. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)



EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK



William H.
Perkins Jr.
Editor

EDITOR
William H. Perkins Jr.
wperkins@mbcb.org

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Tony Martin
tmartin@mbcb.org

LAYOUT/DESIGN
Benjamin Ivey
bivey@mbcb.org

ADVERTISING
Dana Richardson
drichardson@mbcb.org

CIRCULATION MANAGER
Brenda Quattlebaum
bquattlebaum@mbcb.org

EDITOR EMERITUS
Don McGregor

Baptist Record Advisory Committee:
Marcus Bowers, Brandon
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Postmaster:
Send changes of address to: The
BAPTIST RECORD, P.O. Box 530,
Jackson, MS 39205-0530.

Send news, communication, and
address changes to: The Editor,
BAPTIST RECORD, P.O. Box 530,
Jackson, MS 39205-0530.

Tel: (601) 968-3800
Fax: (601) 292-3330
E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org

VOLUME 132 • NUMBER 47
(ISSN-0005-5778)

Published weekly except weeks of July 4 and Christmas by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, 515 Mississippi Street, Jackson, MS 39201. Subscription \$9.35 per year payable in advance. Economy plans available for cooperating Mississippi churches. Periodicals postage paid at Jackson, MS. Member, Association of State Baptist Papers. Deadlines: News items—one calendar week prior to requested publication date. Advertising—two calendar weeks prior to requested publication date. All submissions are subject to editing.

In case you don't know what to get that special teenager on your Christmas gift list this year, the considerate folks at Planned Parenthood have the perfect answer—a gift certificate for an abortion.

From the folks who gave us "Choice on Earth" Christmas cards last year in a twisted effort to commemorate this country's modern-day Slaughter of the Innocents that has claimed more than 50 million babies, the Indiana state affiliate of Planned Parenthood is offering gift certificates that can be redeemed for any of their "services."

"Looking for an unusual, yet practical gift this holiday season? Planned Parenthood of Indiana (PPIN) is now offering gift certificates for services or the recipient's choice of birth control method," states the organization's web site.

"Why not buy a loved one a gift this holiday season that they really need and one that will contribute to their health throughout the year?" asks PPIN President and CEO Betty Cockrum on the web site.

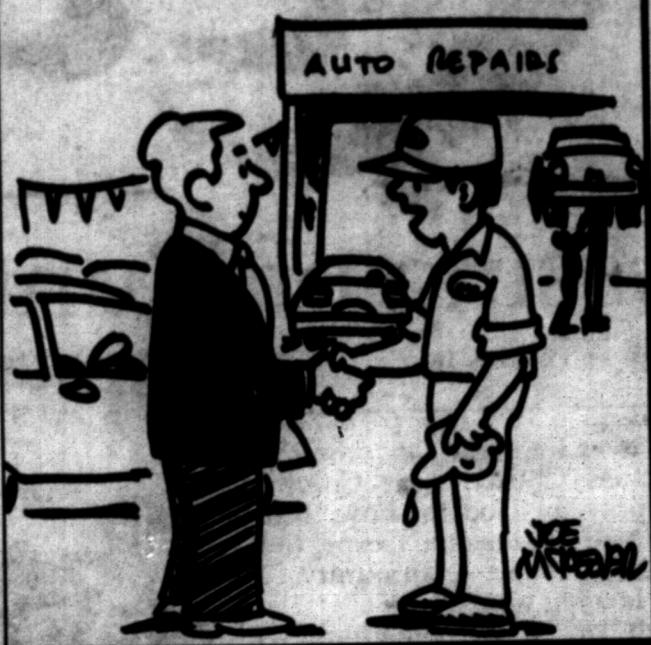
Tellingly, the web site does not specify how the gift certificates contribute to the "health" of the aborted babies.

There's no reason to be concerned, however. "I certainly don't think anyone would consider giving it for that purpose," opines Planned Parenthood spokeswoman Kate Shepherd in an Associated Press interview. What a relief.

"The word inappropriate hardly describes Planned Parenthood's scheme," said Alveda King, niece of civil rights pioneer Martin Luther King Jr., and pastoral associate for the Priests for Life organization. "To give someone a gift card from the nation's largest abortion business is to give death for Christmas."

"Planned Parenthood really should call these 'King Herod certificates' after the Roman ruler who slaughtered tiny babies in his vain attempt to kill the baby Jesus.

"I'M A DISCIPLE OF THE LORD
JESUS CHRIST CLEVERLY DISGUISED
AS AN AUTOMOBILE MECHANIC!"



Better yet, it should just leave Christmas, a celebration of birth, hope, and life, completely alone.

"Planned Parenthood's selling of Christmas gift certificates that can be redeemed for abortion is an irredeemable act. No amount of spin can turn this promotion into anything other than an abomination.

"Congress gave Planned Parenthood \$300 million last year and now a chapter of this group is defiling the celebration of our Savior's birth. As one of America's taxpaying, I want my money back."

At any rate, that special teenager on your Christmas gift list wouldn't be able to use her Planned Parenthood gift certificate for an abortion, right? After all, many states have strict parental notification laws and specific reporting requirements if the pregnancy is the result of sexual abuse or statutory rape, right?

Think again.

Lila Rose, a student at the University of California at Los Angeles who founded the pro-life student magazine The Advocate, recently posed as a young teenager seeking an abortion at a Planned Parenthood of Los Angeles clinic in Santa Monica, Ca. During her visit to the clinic, a Planned Parenthood employee counseled her to lie about her age so she could get the abortion and protect her fictional 23-year-old adult boyfriend.

"If you're 15, we have to report it. If you're not, if you're older than that, then we don't need to," the Planned Parenthood employee explained as Rose secretly taped the conversation. "You could say 16... well, just figure out a birth date that works. And I don't know anything."

There it was, on tape and irrefutable. Planned Parenthood was committing a crime, and what was their reaction? They notified Rose that she was going to be sued if she didn't take down her Internet investigative reports. Faced with the threat of financial ruin, she was forced to delete the reports—but not before other news media outlets had reported the story.

"This lawsuit threat is an example of Planned Parenthood using intimidation against those willing to expose its crimes," Rose told The Christian Post. "Planned Parenthood is a \$900 million operation. Instead of threatening me with a lawsuit, Planned Parenthood should call a press conference condemning its staffers and promising major reform to protect young girls. Instead, they are threatening a college student."

"Imagine a major corporation had been exposed for committing crimes in order to pad its bottom line. There would be a parade of congressmen demanding hearings and reform. Young girls are at risk and Planned Parenthood is receiving federal tax money. The federal government should investigate this and Planned Parenthood, like any other corporation, should be held accountable."

Merry Christmas from America's culture of death.

Former Miss. Baptist Convention president dies

JACKSON, Ms. (Special) — Franklin Dawes Pollard, former Mississippi Baptist Convention (MBC) president and retired pastor of First Church, Jackson, died Nov. 30 at his home in the San Francisco area. He was 74 years of age and had been battling Parkinson's Disease.

A memorial service was held at 2 p.m. on December 11 in the main sanctuary of First Church, Jackson.

Pollard, a former president of Golden Gate Seminary in Mill Valley, Ca., and nominee for president of the Southern Baptist Convention, was the voice of The Baptist Hour radio program for more than 20 years. He was also featured on a TV version of the program and on another TV program, *At Home with the Bible*. He also authored five books.

Pollard twice pastored First Church, Jackson, from 1974-80 and 1986-2002. He pastored Shiloh Terrace Church in Dallas prior to coming to Jackson, and

served as pastor of First Church, San Antonio, Texas, and as president of Golden Gate Seminary in between his stints in Jackson.

"While hymns were being played on a keyboard next to his bed, Dr. Pollard slipped into eternity and into the presence of the God he has faithfully served for many years," said Stan Buckley, who succeeded Pollard as pastor of First Church, Jackson. "We will not fully know Dr. Pollard's influence for the Gospel until we join him in heaven. However, we do know that he touched the lives of people literally all over the world."

"Without question, Dr.



Pollard

Pollard was a gifted pulpiteer. But perhaps his kindness, gentle spirit, and authentic humility are what those who knew him will remember most. He was always an encourager, always positive, and always saw the good in others."

Jim Futral, executive director of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, was pastor of Broadmoor

Church in Jackson (now located in Madison) during Pollard's tenure at First Church, Jackson.

"Dr. Frank Pollard will be missed by all of us," Futral said. "For everyone who knew him, it only took minutes before you were impacted by and impressed by his gentle and

humble spirit and then amazed by his keen razor sharp intellect. Mississippi has been blessed by the man who came to be pastor at First Baptist Church, Jackson, and cast his shadow across our entire state.

"On many an occasion, I heard Dr. Pollard say that he was not from Mississippi but he got here as quick as he could. He came, he preached, he loved, and he touched our lives. While we will miss him greatly, we are all better because he came our way."

Pollard, a native of Olney, Texas, was a graduate of Texas A&M University and a member of the baseball team there. He also graduated from Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth with a master of divinity degree and from New Orleans Seminary with a doctor of ministry degree.

Pollard is survived by his wife Jane, son Brent, daughter Suzanne Pollard Kelly, and one granddaughter.

Missionaries work through financial crisis

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) — Somewhere in a Texas storage shed sits a reminder of the reason Mark Moses left home and headed overseas. It's a paper Moses, then 11 years old, wrote for a school assignment. The first line reads: "I want to be a missionary when I grow up."

"I tell folks my spelling has changed but my calling has not," jokes the Fort Worth, native, who has spent the past 22 years as a Southern Baptist missionary in the Philippines.

It hasn't been easy. Between the joys of new believers and churches starting, Moses also has endured bitter disappointments and devastating personal tragedy — including the loss of his wife Jan to cancer last year.

It's this deep sense of calling that helps drive and sustain Moses and the more than 5,500 other missionaries who serve with the International Mission Board (IMB).

Called to persevere

Today these missionaries must hold fast to their calling as they experience the fallout of a burgeoning economic crisis. That's because missionaries' ability to live out the Great Commission on the mission field depends on the generosity of Southern Baptists' gifts through the Cooperative Program and Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

Those financial lifelines are "the umbilical cord that keeps our heart pumping, our feet moving, and our hands serving," Moses says. "I used to wonder what I would do if, for some reason, my support from Southern Baptists dried up. I've watched other missionaries who don't have the support structure we're privileged to receive. They spend so much of their time focused on raising support that it limits their effectiveness overseas."

Earlier this year, the U.S. dollar lost an average of 12% of its value in the world marketplace — a daunting drop given that 85% of the IMB's \$300 million budget is spent overseas. Though the dollar is rebounding, it has not yet recovered the buying power it had prior to the decline.



GOING TO CHURCH — Southern Baptist missionaries Charlie and Shannon Worthy and three of their four children enjoy a metro ride to church in Naples, Italy. The worldwide economic turmoil hits missionaries like the Worthys especially hard, given the dollar's weakened exchange rate against the euro. Each dollar exchanged for a euro by missionaries like the Worthys instantly loses 20% of its buying power. (BP photo)

"This means that the \$150.4 million given to the 2007 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering spends more like \$132 million — a loss of more than \$18 million in purchasing power," explains David Stevenson, the International Mission Board's financial chief. "To make matters worse, Lottie Moon giving isn't keeping pace with inflation (three to four percent annually)... In accounting terms it's what we would call a 'double whammy.'

Missionaries serving in Western Europe are among the hardest hit. Each time they exchange a dollar for a euro — the currency of the European Union — they're losing 20% of that dollar's value.

Christopher Watts and his wife Colleen are Southern Baptist missionaries from Georgia who've served in Rome since 2004. Less than one-tenth of one percent of the city's population of 4.1 million is evangelical Christian. Watts calls this a "tragic reality" given that the Apostle Paul himself helped lay the foundation of the church in Rome.

"The last two years have been pretty tough for us," he says. "The exchange rate is killing us, and while the IMB has done a fantastic job trying to keep up with it, it's made life harder... I just hope people are able to recognize the priority that missions should take in the life of every Christian and find a way to continue to give. We can't accomplish the task without them."

Heart for the lost

Southern Baptists' goal for the 2008 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering is \$170 million. Though the figure may sound intimidating in light of America's struggling economy, IMB President Jerry Rankin encourages churches to rest in God's providence and continue their 120-year tradition of faithful Lottie Moon support.

"I know that a rough economy hasn't changed Southern Baptists' heart for the lost any more than it has changed missionaries' call to reach them," says Rankin, a native Mississippian and graduate of

Baptist-affiliated Mississippi College in Clinton.

"Difficult circumstances don't excuse us from fulfilling our Great Commission mandate. Hardship and sacrifice, even danger, are all part of the task Christ has called us to. We are asked only to obey and entrust the rest to our heavenly Father."

Whatever the outcome of this year's Lottie Moon offering, Watts offers his heartfelt thanks for Southern Baptists' support.

"There are no words that can express how much my family appreciates how well our Baptist brothers and sisters take care of us," he says. "Their prayers sustain our ministries, our spirits and our health, and their financial gifts put a roof over our heads and food on our tables, not to mention Bibles in the hands of the lost and medicine in the hands of the sick and suffering."

"Without their prayers and their gifts, the whole thing falls apart. Our churches in the States are truly the solid ground upon which God builds our ministries."



PUBLISHED SINCE 1877

DECEMBER 11, 2008

VOL. 132

NO. 47



YOU CAN RESPOND
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Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)

2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)

3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)

4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

GO TELL the story of Jesus

Give so others like... can hear

LOTTIE MOON CHRISTMAS OFFERING

Looking back

10 years ago

Two teams of Mississippi Baptist disaster relief volunteers spend 11 days in Honduras Nov. 24-Dec. 5, helping distribute nearly one million pounds of food sent there by Mississippians in the wake of Hurricane Mitch.

20 years ago

Mississippi ranks seventh among Baptist state conventions in the number of study course awards given during the 1987-88 year, with 41,788 according to the Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville. Hinds-Madison Association in Jackson is 17th among the top 25 associations.

30 years ago

William Carey College, the "college that refused to die," is awarded full membership in the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools.

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By Charles Marx, 1932 - 2004
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CAB HP DBVXQ VBQ PQ

LVIQO EGBAMDG

CVWEG; VYO YAE AC PAM-

BLQNIQL: WE WL EGQ

DWCE AC DAO. QUGQL-

WVYL EUA: QWDGE.

Clue: D=C

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Colossians Four One

CLASSICS

I was talking with Rick Courtney and thanking him for his email information that comes to my desk related to Elder Law. Rick is an attorney who specializes in law as it relates to the needs of older folks and our surviving. I told him if and when I ever get old I would contact him. That led into a conversation with him about senior adults. We begin to talk about what to call older folks. I do not know if there is a term that any of them would agree upon. Just about anything that you can pick does not fit some of them and does not agree with many of them. Some do not mind being called senior adults and others squinch up their faces and use strong non-verbal language to let you know you have touched a nerve.

Many of our churches have tried to come up with cute and meaningful tags, that occasionally work but sometimes they do not work for everybody. The Triple L Club — Live Longer and Like It or something like that was one I heard. One church called them the Next Chapter Club. Some simply refer to them as Mature Adults. That does not go over big.

Rick told me that he was speaking to a group of older adults when they let him know that they did not want to be called seniors or other tags. He said, "Well, that is fine." He said, "I have a friend who restores old cars and you know what they call them?" Well, the folks almost in unison responded to say, "Yeah, they call them antiques and we do not want to be called that." Rick said, "No, I am not talking about antiques. They call them classics." He suggested to them that maybe they were classic adults, classic saints, or classic people. I do not know if it would fit for everybody but surely it describes some of the great folks who I have known who have lived for a healthy period of time. Permit me for just a moment to walk through some thoughts about classic cars and why they are truly classic and maybe apply that to some of the upper adult population.

One thing that makes them classic is that they are valuable. Through the years, I have seen some classic cars and have known some people who did restoration on cars. I am here to tell you it is not cheap. The work that goes into the restoration and the parts purchased to keep it in shape are high dollar and are an extremely valuable investment. If you have not met some of these folks of great value, the loss is all yours. Sometimes old cars are just that. They are old banged up, rusted out, and worn out cars because no one worked at keeping up their value. Some classics are worth many more times what they were when they first came out and a great deal more than the newer, faster wiz bang models. That does not just



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

happen. An ongoing maintenance process must take place. I observe that in folks. They keep their interests up, their relationships strong, and their care for others a priority.

I think of Brother Miller at First Baptist Church Coldwater. Recently, when I preached there he was at the Sunday morning service, the Sunday evening service, and spent all of the afternoon celebrating his 96th birthday. I think of the legendary Dr. John McCall who is still a pastor and still visiting the hospitals, enriching all of our lives, and has passed his 90th birthday. I think of Mrs. Monty Gillum who even after she passed 100 could talk to you about current events, the sinking of the Titanic, and could light up a room with her engaging personality. I am telling you, there are classics all around us virtually every time we come to church, whenever we walk down the street, or stop by their homes. If you do not take the time to see and know them, you have missed out.

The classics are not only valuable — they are usable. Occasionally, it still happens and it is almost a visual shock when an old Model T comes down the road. It is still running and still transporting after all of these years. Classics don't spend a lot of time worrying about what they can't do, but they do what they can. I have known people who were at the upper levels of aging and they spent a good deal of time recounting all of the things that are no longer possi-

ble for them. They cannot go like they use to, work like they once did, and help others in the way they would like. What they often fail to see and understand is that those things do not form the essence of a person. It is love that drives you to reach out to others. It is a genuine caring heart that implements doing things for others. Those aspects are still there sometimes as large as ever. They can be expressed maybe not in the ways they were before, but sometimes even more meaningful than the doing, going, and rushing around of earlier years.

Recently, I was talking to Mary Evans, the lifelong companion of Rev. Pete Evans, a wonderful pastor in our state who served for decades. A few years ago after Pete died Mary gave me something that I cherish and will continue to cherish through my lifetime. It is a broken trophy. In fact, it is not actually the trophy but it is the base of the trophy. It simply says, "City Champs" and the trophy is one that I and a team of guys won playing football with Pete Evans as our coach. It was peewee football and I had long, long ago lost my trophy or possibly, it had been thrown away. Mary was thoughtful enough to ask if I might want that piece of trophy that was leftover. In so doing, she blessed my life beyond measure with a flood of lifelong precious memories that she and her husband had been to me.

A final thought as to why classics are classics is that they are enjoyable. Nobody spends all of the time, energy, and money fixing up an old 1957 Chevy without enjoying it. A classic is kept up, kept around, dusted off, petted, pampered, and revered because it is enjoyable. Occasionally, you may run into an older adult who for a variety of reasons may be less than enjoyable. They may have been through some of the difficulties of life and just seem to not let them go. They may have had disappointments, health challenges, family squabbles, and the longer you live the longer the list could get. I have lived long enough now to observe that in some cases people who get to be old, grumpy, senior adults were grumpy medium adults and not so happy young people either. They have simply added wrinkles to their grumpiness.

On the other hand, I have known a lot more of the classics that go on enjoying life until it is over. A dear old friend, who had lost a leg to a severe diabetic condition, smiled and said to me, "Well at least I still have one leg to stand on." A lady, who had lost her hair because of the chemotherapy, said to me, "I will save a lot of money on hairspray." A fellow became a diabetic and told folks that in his older years he was getting so sweet that he was turning "plum to sugar."

As the years pass by classic cars seem to adapt and find their place in the progress of development. While folks may go to the showroom to smell the new car scent and see the newest product, it is still a joy to come upon an old classic and to be blessed by all that it was and all that it is. In time, may we all be worthy of being called a classic.

The author can be contacted at jfutral@mbcb.org.

CLASSIFIEDS

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MSU student, others experience mission life firsthand

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) — Living in a house with no running water for five months and eating fish and rice for every meal may not appeal to most people. Mississippi State University (MSU) student Brad Gaunt, however, developed a taste for life on the mission field as a short-term worker in Africa.

He also came away with an appreciation for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. Gaunt was grateful for the no-frills accommodations provided by the offering while he shared the Gospel in Senegal among the Lebou, a Muslim people of 150,000.

Gaunt was one of more than 40 student missionaries who participated last spring in the Hands On program of the International Mission Board (IMB). Some of the costs of his food, lodging, and transportation were offset by a portion of the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering and the Cooperative Program.

The Hands On program, which gives seminary and college students a semester of missions experience in Africa, will expand to other countries in January.

"[The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering] takes a huge weight off your shoulders," said Gaunt, a senior agri-

cultural major at MSU and member of First Church in El Dorado, Ark. "When you don't have to support yourself overseas, that means you can dedicate all your time to ministry."

This year's Lottie Moon Christmas Offering goal is \$170 million. Last year, Southern Baptists gave a record \$150.4 million to the offering, but fell short of the \$165 million goal. In addition to helping with the Hands On program, the offering and the Cooperative Program also provide support for more than 5,500 missionaries.

Gaunt plans to return full time to the mission field after finishing his education. "I'm sold," Gaunt said. "As soon as I get my degree, get my seminary requirements... I'm ready to get back over there."

Gaunt's Christian witness isn't isolated to faraway places, however.

"As a student at MSU, Brad has taken an active role in taking the Gospel to the nations," said Michael Ball, Baptist Student Union director at MSU. "He has worked with our weekly International Ministry seeking to build relationships with students from other countries."

"As our BSU Missions Chairman this year, he has helped educate other students

of the needs around the world. He is committed to mobilizing others to serve. He has led by example."

Life-changing

Students' lives are being changed by serving overseas, said Chad Stillwell, who heads up the IMB's Hands On program. Many of the students are learning that becoming a missionary takes sacrifice. Though the Lottie Moon offering and the Cooperative Program helped, Hands On students offset most of the costs. Each student pays a flat rate that covers airfare, insurance, visa, and training materials.

Aubrey Brown learned about sacrifice and the importance of the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering while working in Tanzania with a Hands On team. Living in the mountains in a mud hut with concrete floors and no electricity or running water, Brown — a member of First Church in Raymore, Mo. — taught English in a small school.

The only existing supplies were chalk and a chalkboard. Through the offering and reading supplies donated by her home church, Brown and her team ministered to the children in their English classes.

Brown came away with an education of her own. "The



LEARNING THE ROPES — Mississippi State University senior Brad Gaunt (right), who served as a student missionary with the International Mission Board's Hands On program, walks alongside a Lebou fisherman on the coast of Senegal. Gaunt, a member of First Church, El Dorado, Ark., said he gained a new appreciation for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering during his five months of service. The offering helped offset some of his living expenses. (BP photo)

great thing about [this missions experience is] it gives you a better idea of what missionary life is truly like," said Brown, a graduate of Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Mo. "I'm going back."

Editor's note: For more information on the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering and how your gifts help support mission work, go to imb.org/lottieatwork. To learn how to get involved in the Hands On program, go to thetask.org/hanson.

Roundup: Economy affects divorces; family advertisers named

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Some say there is a silver lining in every cloud, and during the nation's economic downturn, one positive effect is that some couples are deciding to work through their marital difficulties rather than opting for an expensive divorce.

"Marriage counselors and divorce lawyers nationwide say more distressed couples are putting off divorce because the cost of splitting up is prohibitive in a time of stagnant salaries, plummeting home values, and rising unemployment," MSNBC reporter Alex Johnson wrote in an article Nov. 23.

Johnson noted that a contested divorce that goes to court can cost a couple with at least one child from \$53,000 to \$188,000 in attorneys' fees, financial advice, counseling, and real estate costs for buying or renting separate homes.

Ten sessions of marriage counseling, meanwhile, cost about \$1,000, and that's the route many people are taking these days, he said.

The evidence for a decline in divorces is primarily anecdotal, Johnson said, because national divorce statistics for 2008 aren't yet available but some local governments that report semiannual statistics are seeing a difference.

"In Chicago, the Cook County Circuit Court system reported that divorce and separation filings fell by 600 — or roughly five percent — during the first nine months of the year, compared to the same period last year," Johnson wrote. "Comparable drops have been reported in Fresno County, Ca., and Comanche County, Ok."

Miami-Dade County reported an 18% drop in divorce filings from January to May, the article said, compared to the same period last year. The Miami area has seen home prices fall by about 20% during the same period, adding to speculation that people can barely pay for one home, much less two.

Johnson said divorce rates tend to rise historically during hard economic times, but this downturn is different because of its severity, according to experts. Census figures reported a decline in divorces from 1930 to 1935 during the Great Depression.

Divorce rates "weren't high, but they went down," Jay Teachman, a sociology professor at Western Washington University in Bellingham, Wa., told MSNBC.

"People couldn't afford to divorce."

Best family advertisers

Coca-Cola, Whirlpool, and Hewlett-Packard were ranked among the 10 best television advertisers based on the content in prime time broadcast programs they chose to support, according to the Parents Television Council (PTC), a pro-family watchdog group.

"The role that television advertisers play in determining what type of content comes into every home in America cannot be overstated," Tim Winter, the group's president, said in a news release Nov. 24. "We commend the advertisers on our best list that have chosen to associate their hard-earned corporate brands with positive programming that the entire family can watch together."

The 10 best PTC advertisers are Coca-Cola; The Clorox Company; Century 21 Real Estate; H&R Block; Ferrero SpA (USA); CVS Caremark Corporation; Whirlpool Corporation; The Hershey Company; State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance; and Hewlett-Packard.

The Parents Television Council based its rankings on each company's prime time network television ad buys during the 2007-08 season. Companies with the most ads on green light shows — those

determined by PTC to be family friendly — were ranked the best, while those companies with the most ads on red light shows were ranked the worst.

"Parents can thank many of the advertisers on the worst list for enabling the networks to pump some of the most shocking and outrageous content on the air today directly into their living rooms," Winter said.

The 10 worst advertisers, according to PTC, were General Motors Corporation; Nissan North America; L'Oréal USA; Pepsi-Cola North America; GlaxoSmithKline Holdings; Reckitt Benckiser; Target Corporation; Kohl's Corporation; Verizon Communications; and Toyota Motor North America.

"During the holiday season, we call on our members and all concerned citizens to carefully consider which companies they will support with their shopping dollars," Winter said. "While Kohl's and Target landed on our worst list, Wal-Mart barely missed the cut-off for our best list and is to be lauded for its commitment to families."

"It is up to consumers to show companies that supporting family friendly programming makes good business sense," he added. "The PTC will continue to encourage

age corporate responsibility for advertising buys and ask consumers to do the same by reinforcing that message with their wallets."

Bible curriculum approved
The Alabama State Board of Education voted unanimously in November to approve The Bible in History and Literature, a conservative curriculum, for statewide use in public schools.

Last year the state board of education approved a more liberal book, The Bible and Its Influence, which drew some criticism for its inaccuracies such as teaching that Jesus Christ was born in Nazareth.

"That's a major issue that deals with prophecy," board member Stephanie Bell told The Gadsden Times. "It makes it hard when you have to correct parts of books."

The Bible and Its Influence, the newspaper said, does not require reading the Bible aloud in class and says, "Some read Genesis as a literal account of the mechanics of creation. Still others read it as a poem about God's relationship with humans. Many read the book as both."

The Bible in History and Literature, meanwhile, says, "Public schools may not provide religious instruction but they may teach about religion."

JUST FOR THE RECORD



1. Gillsburg Church deacon ordination

2. Winters

3. The Overstreets

4. Baby dedication, Providence Church



MISSISSIPPI BAPTISTS

1. **Gillsburg Church, Gillsburg,** ordained Tommy Smith as deacon recently. Shown, from left, is his daughter Courtney, wife Lawanda, Smith, and pastor Chris Teasley.
2. **Charles "Chubby" Winters** was ordained to the Gospel ministry Nov. 8 by **Calvary Chapel, Parchman.** He is pastor of **Bethany Church, Drew,** and serves as associate pastor at **Calvary.**
3. **Marvin Overstreet** was recently licensed to the Gospel ministry by **Calvary Church, Parchman.** He is currently serving as interim at **Faith Church, Parchman,** and is associate pastor/intern at **Calvary.** He is shown with his wife, Carrie.
4. **Providence Church, Carrollton,** held a baby dedication Nov. 9. Shown are John and Amy Smitherman with John Robert, pastor David Haggerty, and Clay and Julia Beckwith with Hollis Hartley.
5. The groundbreaking service for the new Family Life Center of **Moselle Memorial Church, Jones County Association,** was held Nov. 16. Shown are the participants.
6. Women on Mission, **Phalti Church, Prentiss,** hosted **Celebration: Called to Love** Nov. 13. The 18 ladies who attended were challenged to respond to God's call to love Him and others. Shown are the participants.
7. **Calvary Church, Columbia,** honored Reuben McDowell Nov. 2 for 15 years as Minister of Music. Shown with McDowell are his wife Traci and children Sawyer and Logan.
8. **Faith Church, Ovett,** is presenting a live Nativity scene Dec. 19-20, 6 p.m.
9. **Mt. Carmel Church, Edinburg,** will be hosting the Blackwood Legacy Trio Dec. 11, 7 p.m. A love offering will be taken.
10. **Cornerstone Church, Purvis,** is presenting **A Night in Bethlehem,** a family interactive walk-through drama, Dec. 13, 6-9 p.m.
11. **Mt. Zion Church, Eupora,** is presenting a **Christmas Homecoming,** Gaither Style, Dec. 14, 6 p.m. Refreshments following the program.
12. The Worship Choir of **Cleary Church, Florence,** will present **There is Peace in the World** Tonight Dec. 13 and 14 at 6 p.m.
13. The youth of **Randolph Church, Randolph,** delivered Thanksgiving cheer and fruit baskets to Lucy Blackwood and other church family shut-ins recently. Participants included Lindsey Watson, Amity Mooneyham, Shelby Quarles, Chathryn McGregor, Haley Watson, Hannah Quarles, Regan Watson, Joe White, Jennifer Quarles, and Annette Mooneyham.
14. The adult choir of **McAdams Church, Sallis,** will present its Christmas cantata, **Hope Has Hands,** Dec. 13, 11 a.m.

Baptists suffer losses in Nigerian post-election violence

JOS, Nigeria (BP) — At least 12 Nigerian Baptists were killed and five Baptist churches burned during Thanksgiving weekend riots sparked by local election results in Jos, Nigeria.

International Mission Board (IMB) workers in the area were unharmed by the violence that began Nov. 28. The workers and several Nigerian Baptist congregations are reaching out to comfort and house those left hurting and homeless.

News agencies report more than 300 people killed and thousands injured in fires and riots. Dozens of churches, mosques, businesses, and homes were burned in Jos, a city located between Nigeria's largely Christian south and Muslim north. An estimated 10,000 people have been displaced from their homes.

When gunfire quieted Dec. 2, a local Baptist pastor ventured into the still-smoldering city to assess the damage. "One Baptist church lost five members and one deacon," he reported. "At least one pastor's home was burned down. It was a very, very sad day."

Unscathed by the violence, the pastor's church is housing some of those who have lost their homes. Other local Baptist churches are doing the same. Church families also are helping to house boarding students evacuated from the Baptist high school there.

"Everyone is sad and afraid, but we have faith," the pastor said, noting rumors swirl that the fighting may start again. "We can only do our part to help. We will find out more about the damages in coming days and find out what we can do."

While local churches are serving as shelters, armed police and military troops

patrol the streets to keep the peace among local groups clashing over issues steeped in tribal identity, religion, and land. Local news agencies report the Red Cross and government agencies have set up shelters and brought in large-scale relief materials such as mattresses.

When a local pastor needed medicine for his sick daughter discharged from a hospital to make room for incoming riot victims, IMB worker Mary Lovett was able to find what the girl needed.

Tennesseans Mary and her husband Mike also have helped other local friends like Paul (not his real name). "[Paul] is a very strong Christian, and he's not afraid to tell people," Mike said.

Paul lives in a neighborhood where Christians and Muslims live side by side, which caused Mike to worry when he started hearing gunfire in the city Nov. 28. After the tumultuous weekend, Paul showed up at the Lovetts' house on Monday with only one shoe and nothing else in hand.

"He said his house was burned down, and he lost everything," Mike said. "I lent him some of my shoes. We just happened to be the same size."

Tensions in Jos have erupted into violence a few times in the past decade, but Muslims and Christians typically have lived in peace in Africa's most populous nation. According to the World Values Survey, Nigerians are known as some of the world's friendliest and happiest people.

Knowing this, IMB worker Harriet Bowman from Georgia is confident peace will be restored and workers and volunteer teams will continue taking the Gospel to countless vil-

lages that have never heard the message of Jesus.

"We may have to be a little more cautious, but this won't change anything that we're trying to do at all," she said. "In fact, we'll just try harder."

A Jos pastor asks that Christians pray:

- for comfort for those who have lost their loved ones.
- that the fighting does not continue.
- for Nigeria to have peace and unity.
- for hearts to be open to hear the message of Jesus.

Meanwhile, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has called on the Nigerian government to launch an immediate and independent investigation of the clashes and to prosecute those found to be perpetrators.

The U.S. government should press Nigeria to launch the inquiry into the violence, USCIRF said in a Dec. 3 news release. "Without a swift, firm government declaration to demand an end to such violence and actions to investigate and implement preventive measures to head off such unrest in the future, Nigerians will remain vulnerable to more deadly conflict," Felice D. Gaer, USCIRF chair, said in the news release.

A Baptist Press query to USCIRF was not answered by deadline on Dec. 5 as to whether the Nigerian government had signaled any plans for action.

Since 2002, Nigeria has been on USCIRF's Watch List, a group of countries that merit close monitoring because of a significant pattern of restrictions on religious freedom.

USCIRF noted, "Since 1999, more than 10,000 Nigerians



VIOLENT UNREST — Officials of the Nigerian Red Cross aid injured victims of the civil unrest in the central-Nigerian city of Jos on Nov. 30. (BP photo courtesy of AFP Photo/Pius Utomi Ekpei via Newscom)

reportedly have been killed in sectarian and communal attacks and reprisals between Muslims and Christians.

Meanwhile, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has called on the Nigerian government to launch an immediate and independent investigation of the clashes and to prosecute those found to be perpetrators.

The number of deaths resulting from sectarian violence reportedly had decreased over the past few years, due in part to a more rapid and effective response by Nigerian security forces, but the latest outbreak has reversed that trend.

"There have been disturbing reports of foreign Islamic extremists, particularly from neighboring Niger and Chad, participating in the violence in Jos, which is consistent with the reports of foreign sources of funding and support for Islamic extremist activities in northern Nigeria. Many Muslims and Christians have been identified as perpetrators of violence in past

years, but very few, if any, have been prosecuted."

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Mississippi Baptist Convention Board officers, exec. comm. named

JACKSON, Ms. (Special) — The Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB), in their organizational meeting on October 29 after adjournment of the Mississippi Baptist Convention annual meeting,

elected Randy Von Kanel (center) to serve as Board president for 2008-09; Steve Jackson (left), pastor of McLaurin Heights Church, Pearl, as vice-president; and Rex Yancey, pastor of First Church, Ripley, as

secretary. The Board also elected the Executive Committee for 2008-09. The Executive Committee is charged with administering the ministries and programs of the convention board when the full board is not in session.

2008-09 MBCB Executive Committee

Wiley Abel, pastor
First Church, Wiggins

Mike Aultman, pastor
Military Church, Sumrall

Weldon Aultman, member
First Church, Indianola

Hal J. Bates, pastor
First Church, Collinsville

Alvester Brown, pastor
Solid Rock Church, Greenville

Eric C. Clark, member
First Church, Brandon

Wallace Cox, member
Blue Lake Church, Crowder

Sandra Gunn, member
First Church, Hattiesburg

Bartis Harper, member
First Church, Hattiesburg

Buddy Huff, member
First Church, Jackson

Bobby Kirk, member
Roundaway Church, Doddsdale

John R. Pace Jr., pastor
First Church, Terry

Lloyd Sweatt, pastor
Meadowood Church, Amory

Randy Von Kanel, pastor
First Church, Tupelo
(MBCB President)

J. Steve Jackson, pastor
McLaurin Heights Church,
Pearl
(MBCB Vice-President)

Rex Yancey, pastor
First Church, Ripley
(MBCB Secretary)

Ex Officio:
Jim Futral, executive director
MBCB

Mickey Dalrymple, pastor
Fairview Church, Columbus
(MBCB President)



NOBTS team to help strained seminary marriages

NEW ORLEANS (BP) — For students and their families, the move to a seminary campus brings many new challenges. Seminary families often are faced with tighter finances, smaller living quarters and the stress of theological studies.

With the adjustment to new churches and new schools for the children, the combined effect can strain family relationships — especially marriages.

"Coming to seminary is just stressful for your marriage," said Kathy Steele, assistant professor of psychology and counseling at New Orleans Seminary (NOBTS). "How can a pastor or minister go out and build a healthy church if his own family is unhealthy?"

Steele and a small group of campus leaders at NOBTS who developed a burden for student marriages, began meeting together in May to develop a plan to help strengthen and enrich marriages. Known as the Marriage Initiative group, they believe a focus on strong marriages during ministerial training will result in healthier ministers and, in turn, ministries.

NOBTS provost Steve Lemke agrees. "No married minister can be maximally effective in Christian service without a

healthy marriage," he said. "We want our graduates not only to teach about healthy marriages but to model healthy relationships in their own marriages."

The team, which also includes professors Kristin Carver, Jerry Pounds, and Ed Steele along with dean of students Craig Garrett, dreamed of creating an intentional focus on healthy marriages at the seminary — a dream that now has become a reality.

"We have committed ourselves to look for ways to strengthen marriages on campus," Garrett said. "[Marriage enrichment] is a service we hope to provide students while they are here ... to give them resources to strengthen their marriages and families."

As the team studied the issue, God placed a similar burden for campus marriages on the hearts of the leaders charged with planning the Leavell Lectures, an annual event sponsored by the student wives organization on campus.

Rhonda Kelley, wife of seminary president Chuck Kelley and professor of women's ministry, asked the Marriage Initiative group to plan and lead a campus-wide marriage retreat during the Leavell Lectures. The

lecture endowment provided the funding necessary to organize a retreat of this scale.

"God really opened the door for us to have this retreat this semester," Steele said. "Our hope was to motivate and encourage couples, but not only that, to give them some basic skills that can make a difference in their marriage relationships."

More than 80 couples participated in the two-day retreat held in early October. Called A Lasting Promise, the retreat focused on oneness, communication, and expectations in marriage. Retreat presenters shared biblical principles to help couples identify problem areas in their marriages and practical tools to address those problems.

"I'm still hearing comments, people talking about how they've really got things to work on," Steele said. "For us, that was a big focus. We don't want to just inspire. We want to give tools for successful marriages."

The organizers were pleased with the participation. Garrett said keeping the registration cost low and the provision of inexpensive child care helped make the retreat a success. For

only \$7, a couple with children could attend the retreat and receive quality child care at the seminary's preschool.

The Marriage Initiative group also received help from a timely coincidence — the release of the marriage-focused film Fireproof. Not only were student couples encouraged to see the movie, the seminary offered them a chance to see it for free.

Endowment funding was used to rent a local theater, and seminary couples packed the theater for the free screening of the movie. The reviews were overwhelmingly positive.

"Fireproof highlights so clearly the importance of being obedient to God in how you respond to your spouse," Steele said. "It's the kind of movie that gives lots of hope to couples."

The dean of students office also provided free copies of The Love Dare, a 40-day guided devotional book akin to the book featured in the movie.

Just weeks after the retreat, the seminary launched two home-based Bible study groups to continue the momentum that started at the retreat. The six-week studies use The Love Dare and video segments from Fireproof to help participants give proper focus to their marriages.

"We are starting small this semester, simply because of the timing," Garrett said of the two home groups. "We are looking to expand on that next semester. We really want to see home groups as part of what we do to [strengthen campus marriages]."

Steele noted that the marriage focus is gaining in popularity on campus.

"One of the things that has been exciting to me is to see how many of our faculty couples really feel a passion and a burden to help students deal with marriage issues," he said.

William Carey University

Hattiesburg Gulfport New Orleans

COLLEGE NEWS

1. Mississippi College awards the first Pete Evans Scholarship to MC senior Matt Alexander, Brookhaven. The \$5000 scholarship is given in memory of the late William F. "Pete" Evans and is supplied by Hattiesburg businessman Bobby Chain.
2. The William Carey University Speech and Debate Team tied for first place in combined sweepstakes with Kansas Wesleyan University at the Louisiana State University tournament held recently. Under the direction of coach Jennifer Talbert, the team competed against 15 other schools including Oklahoma City University, University of Arkansas, John Brown University, University of Texas and Sam Houston State University.

OBITUARY

1. Lee Ormand Gardner, 55, died Nov. 30 at the Gilmore Memorial Regional Medical Center in Amory after a sudden illness. He was born in Tupelo April 20, 1953. He grew up in Shannon and graduated from Shannon High School in 1971. He attended Itawamba Community College and holds degrees from Mississippi State University and New Orleans Seminary. He taught and coached football at Shannon High School and became Assistant Principal. He was ordained in 1989 and pastored Jones Chapel Church, Brewer Church, Auburn Church, and pastored the Smithville Church for 12 years. Services were Dec. 2 at the Smithville Church. He is survived by his wife, Connie McKay Gardner of Smithville; parents O.H. "Bunch" and Martha Gardner, Shannon; three sons, Ben, Drew, and Luke, all of Smithville; one brother, Bud Gardner and wife Jennifer, Tuscaloosa, Al.; one sister, Sandy Gardner, Lawrenceville, Ga.; one brother-in-law, Larry McKay and his wife Roberta, Baldwin; one sister-in-law, Jan Hall, and her husband Bobby, Madison; and numerous nieces and nephews.

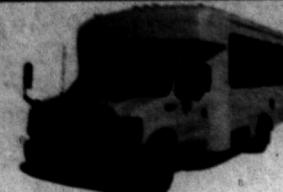
STATE CHANGES



1. The Martins

1. Pine Grove Church, Union, has called Sayne Martin to his first full-time pastorate. He is in his second year at New Orleans Seminary where he is pursuing his Masters of Divinity degree. Shown with him are his wife Gamble and two daughters, Maddy and Isabelle.

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This ad is provided by the Education Commission of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board. The Education Commission is the primary liaison between Mississippi Baptists and our three Baptist institutions of higher learning - Blue Mountain, Mississippi College, and William Carey University. The Commission acknowledges and is grateful for the support of MS Baptists for these three institutions. It is important to encourage potential students in our churches and youth programs to consider attending a Baptist college/university in Mississippi.

Mumbai attacks add to mix of India, Pakistan tensions

MUMBAI, India (BP) — The smoke from days of terrorism has barely cleared. Nearly 200 people in India's largest city are dead. Hundreds more lie wounded. Yet world attention already is shifting from Mumbai itself to international fallout from the attacks, such as:

- whether the bloody assault on Mumbai will spark a retaliation from India against its bitter rival Pakistan, from which the terrorists reportedly came.

- Both powers possess nuclear arms and have come close to using them against each other in the past.

- What would new India-Pakistan tensions mean for the war against the Taliban in Afghanistan and lawless northwest Pakistan?

While military and political analysts monitor those possibilities, Mumbai's people need prayer, said an American Christian worker based there. "Our city has been a scene of tragedy and terror over the past few days, but it's not over," the worker said.

"The effects will be deeply felt for months and years to come by the families of those who have lost loved ones — and for those who have felt their sense of security in this city slip away."

TV news reports may be showing Mumbai's people getting back to normal in the city of more than 18 million or defiantly protesting the attacks and the politicians they believe failed to prevent them, but the trauma goes deep.

"The fact of the terrorist attacks has numbed the city's population," the worker noted. "People were indiscriminately murdered for reasons as yet only speculated about. Please pray for God to work in this horrible human

tragedy to draw people of all religions to the end of themselves, of their own plans and dreams, and desire to know the real truth about the reason for their tenuous existence."

How does the worker feel personally? "We have personally been shut out from the city because of security issues [related to the attacks] and are feeling probably as numb as any of the citizens here," he said.

"This has been a very sad week, sad for the city's loss of life and sense of security but worse, sad for the Kingdom's loss, for among the dead are Muslim terrorists, Hindus, a rabbi's family, hotel employees, socialites, businessmen from many countries, and more."

"Perhaps there was a believer among them. Apart from that possibility, they all — terrorists and victims alike — right now face the same eternity before one God. We lift up our hearts and cry out to Him for this city's redemption.

"How do we feel? We feel an urgency that the Gospel be shared among all of the lost."

The worker, who ministers among multiple people groups in the city, also has an urgent concern about potential backlash against minorities — particularly against Muslims.

"Please pray for ongoing communal harmony," he urged. "Pray that those who would incite hatred and repercussions here, not for ideology as they purport but for personal gain, will not succeed. The city's populace is vulnerable."

The Mumbai attacks come in the wake of many violent incidents in India over the past year, including ongoing terrorism in Kashmir, bombings in multiple cities, and extremist



GRIM SCENE — Indian policemen walk through the carnage at the Chatrapati Shivaji Railway terminal in Mumbai — one of several sites in a series of deadly attacks that began late on Nov. 26, with two five-star hotels among the targets of gunmen armed with powerful assault rifles and grenades. (BP photo courtesy of AFP PHOTO/STR via Newscom)

Hindu attacks on Christians in Orissa and other states.

Even as India increases its international profile, growing ethnic and religious tensions have led some Indian commentators to wonder if the nation will survive as a secular democracy.

"[A]ll of these are signs of a simmering India," said Bobby Gupta, president of the Christian ministry organization HCI Global Partners, in a call to prayer following the Mumbai attacks.

"This is not why our [nation] was formed. It was intended to facilitate independence... with human

rights to all people providing freedom [and] justice for all mankind, but this is fast crumbling in the midst of a growing economy and modernization of the nation.

"The hope to become an economic influence could crumble and the opportunity for the church to have a global impact could be lost."

He called on Christians to pray for peace in India, for the nation's leaders, for courage among Indian believers and for a "value transformation" among young people so the next generation will live in peace and harmony.

India, he said, could

become "an incredible global influence" to carry the Gospel throughout the world. "Only prayer can make this change," he said.



MISSISSIPPI BAPTISTS

The Baptist Record
P.O. Box 530
Jackson, MS 39205

NAMB calls Baptist men to 'focused prayer' effort in January

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP) — Recognizing both the power of prayer and the urgent need for men to pray, the North American Mission Board (NAMB) is issuing a call for Baptist men to engage in focused prayer in January. The result could be the largest-ever combined prayer effort by Southern Baptist men in praying for God to do a fresh work among them and across North America.

To help men do this, NAMB's mission education team has prepared a 31-day prayer guide to lead men in seven areas of prayer:

- recognize God's plan for men.
- a call to holiness.
- confession and repentance.
- passion for the church as the bride of Christ.
- models of mission action.
- the hearts of men.
- workers for the harvest.

"We're convinced we won't have clar-

ity of purpose and mission in our churches without a genuine movement of God," said Jim Burton, NAMB's mission education team leader. "There's no resource we can create that can replace a genuine movement of God among men, so that's what Baptist men will be praying for in January."

Burton said state mission education leaders affirmed the idea to mobilize Southern Baptist men in prayer at the 2008 NAMB Mission Education Roundtable in New Orleans. The state leaders were concerned by a decline in Baptist men's enrollment over the past decade, but more concerned about the deep need for a movement of God among Christian men in Southern Baptist churches.

At first, the plan was for state and national mission education leaders to pray together during January for the future of men's work within the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

NAMB's Baptist Men's Task Force recommended involving local churches in the effort. Now more than 50,000 copies of the prayer guide have been printed and more have been downloaded online.

"We need to pray that God will do a work among the men of our churches," Burton said. "Many of the recurring issues in our culture can be traced to fathers being absent physically, emotionally and spiritually. God has called men to lead their families on mission. We cannot be a convention on mission until our men are leading their families to do likewise."

The January prayer focus comes as NAMB launches the SBC's first-ever weekly men's mission education curriculum. Baptist Men Online, a weekly e-newsletter available free of charge beginning in January, will include a missions focus article; a personal development article; weekly

small-group accountability plans; urgent mission prayer requests; and monthly mission meeting plans.

In the past, Baptist Men have used monthly mission education curriculum provided first by the SBC's former Brotherhood Commission and then by NAMB. Churches that mobilize men to pray together during January are encouraged to then use the Baptist Men Online curriculum to begin or strengthen a men's ministry in their church.

"We're seeing a real desire among men to connect with God's purpose in a way that's real," Burton said. "We believe Baptist Men Online can be a vehicle to help them do that."

Editor's note: The 31-day prayer guide can be either downloaded from the Baptist Men's national website at www.bmen.net, or ordered from Baptist state convention mission education leaders. To sign up for Baptist Men Online, visit www.bmen.net.

THE VILLAGE VIEW



Dr. Rory Lee, Executive Director
P.O. Box 27
Clinton, MS 39060-0027

GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

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NOV. 22 - DEC. 8

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John & Martha Holloway
Mr. & Mrs. Ross Burnett
Mrs. Catherine S. Ferguson
Mildred Campbell
Linda & Ray Campbell
Rhonda Cotton
Hubert B. Scrivener Foundation
Peggy Dendy
Mrs. Jana Parrish
Mr. & Mrs. David Denson
Mrs. Catherine S. Ferguson
Paula Dunham
Ladies Adult SSC, Springdale BC
Steve Fondren
Hubert B. Scrivener Foundation
Mr. David Haworth
Adult 7 SS Dept, FBC-Vicksburg
Carolyn Heiden
Country Maidens Bible Study Class
Sharon Hewlett
Hubert B. Scrivener Foundation
Mrs. Earilda Holden
Mr. & Mrs. Sonny Knight
Ms Allene Holloway
John & Martha Holloway
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Merry Christmas

Remembering that Jesus is the Greatest Gift!
Merry Christmas to you and yours from The Baptist Children's Village children, staff and trustees.

HOUSEPARENTS NEEDED

The Baptist Children's Village has an opening for a Christian, mission-minded, husband and wife team without dependent children to serve in the position of relief houseparents.

Houseparents receive an excellent salary with benefits and work a 10 day on 5 day off work schedule. All qualified candidates must be at least 25 years of age, have a high energy level, excellent driving record and no criminal history. They also must have a high school education or GED. A private bedroom and meals are included while on duty.

For more information and to request an application please call
601-664-8085



The Girls in Action (GA) of Woodlawn Baptist Church in Vicksburg spent a cool Saturday afternoon cleaning out flower beds and raking leaves. After they finished working, the group had dinner with the residents of Carter Cottage.



Rueben and Dewitt Hodnett of Anguilla delivered 1,000 lbs of sweet potatoes to The Baptist Children's Village just in time for Thanksgiving. Jimmy Turner owner of The Sweet Potato Shed in Belzoni, Mississippi donated the potatoes.



The Wild Turkey Federation donated 12 turkeys to The Baptist Children's Village to be used during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. Federation members presented the turkeys to BCV Public Relations Associate, Celeste Cade.

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Your Missions Involvement

Matthew 9:35-38; 28:18-20; Romans 15:23-28

By Bill Patterson

"I am a missionary. I am a missionary." I heard a child singing those words as he gathered salad from the buffet. It was Sunday afternoon at a Western Sizzlin' outside Richmond, Virginia. My wife Debbie and I were there with others from the International Mission Board's Missionary Learning Center. Our family was preparing to go to South Korea as missionaries.

The boy, around seven, was happy as he could be. He wasn't part of our group, but his family looked as if they'd just come from church. I stood beside him in the salad line and asked, "So, you're a missionary, huh?"

His face turned toward me, a smile erupted, and he replied enthusiastically, "I sure am!"

"Want to tell me about it?" I asked.

"My pastor said, 'If you bring people with you to church and they come to know the Lord, then you're doing part of what a missionary does.'" He continued along the salad line with his infectious smile, singing as he went, "I am a missionary. I am a missionary."

He was right. It is not just age, education, or crossing an ocean that makes a person a missionary, as if something magical happens on the plane during the journey. If a person is not a missionary before leaving the States, going to another country won't make them one. Mission involvement begins with being God's witness whether it is across Main Street, across Mississippi, or across Mozambique.

Patterson

not yet know the Lord.

A few months after arriving in South Korea as a missionary, I attended a baptismal service on a basic training base near Nonsan, in the center of the country. The Nonsan Baptist Center, located on the base, was a site for evangelism among young South Korean inductees who were experiencing the difficulties of "boot camp." That day six-hundred-and-eighty-six men who had come to know the Lord were baptized. I'll never forget that service or the joyous singing of the group after their baptisms.

Several thousand men each year come to know the Lord while visiting the Nonsan Baptist Center. Do you know who provided the funds to

Give to Missions (Rom. 15:23-28)

Paul planned to visit believers in Rome. He desired they equip him to preach in Spain (v. 24). From Paul's plans we learn a spiritual principle: those who know the Lord are to help others carry the gospel to those who do

build that Baptist Center? You did—you and others who contributed to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions. Debbie and I give our largest Christmas gift each year through the Lottie Moon Christian Offering. We always think of that Baptist Center when we do.

Pray for Workers (Matt. 9:35-38)

Jesus was moved to compassion when He "saw" the multitudes (v. 36). Do you and I really see people? When we stand before the clerk in the grocery, do we see only a person who will help with our purchases or someone who is loved of God and bound either for heaven or hell? Jesus saw the people, really saw them, and felt great compassion.

It is not recorded that Jesus prayed for their salvation, although I believe He did. More than praying for the lost, Jesus' emphasis was on praying for the laborers. The Greek indicates Jesus taught His disciples to pray for workers to be "thrust out" into the harvest fields. Later on, some of those disciples who

prayed for workers in Matthew 9:38 became the workers sent by the Lord (Matt. 10:5). They put "shoe leather" to their prayers.

Disciple the Nations (Matt. 28:18-20)

Two weeks before my mother died, she called me to her bedside to share some words that will always be important to me. We often save important words until the end. Jesus, knowing He would be with the disciples only a short while, shared his last words in the Book of Matthew, the Great Commission. Are you a Great Commission Christian?

Prayers and gifts, important as they are, can never take the place of our personal witness. The Great Commission calls us to give ourselves to international, intercultural, and interracial missions. What can you do to make disciples in your area, state, and nation? Have you volunteered to go on a mission trip? Wherever you witness, nearby or far away, you'll be singing with the boy mentioned earlier in this article, "I am a missionary."

Patterson is pastor of First Church, Richland.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE When Others Helped You

I Thessalonians 2:1-16

By Joyce C. Rogers

Paul wrote the first letter to the Thessalonians to encourage the believers in Christian living and to assure them of the reality of the second coming. Each of the five chapters end with a reference to the second coming.

On his second missionary journey, Paul traveled to Thessalonica, capitol of Macedonia. His Jewish adversaries had accused him earlier of being a heretic, a deceiver, one who victimized an ignorant public. In chapter two, Paul defends himself concerning his alleged ulterior motives.

Teach Boldly

Paul is confident that the gospel he preaches so boldly is from God, not men. The approval of men is not important to him.

Is the approval of men too

important to us? Of course we want to live in peace when we can, but God is our judge. God is the one who tests our hearts. Suffering and opposition served only to make Paul stronger and bolder, as it tends to do. Ananias was told that Saul (Paul) was "God's chosen instrument to carry My name before the Gentiles, kings and the sons of Israel. I will certainly show him how much he must suffer for My name" (Acts 9:15-16 HCSB). Persecution did not stop Paul from preaching; it made him bolder.

Teach Out of Love

Paul continues his defense. He says he didn't use flattery and was not trying to trick them in any way. Instead, he and his companions Silas and Timothy were gentle as a mother with her little ones. Their

love for the Thessalonians compelled them to share the gospel and their lives as well. Praise from men was not their motivation.

Love is the greatest motivation we have for living godly lives. Love covers a multitude of sins. Paul and his companions might have asserted their rights and authority as apostles of Christ, but they did not.

In Philippi Paul had been cast into prison and received insulting treatment. Some of these same Jews who opposed him there came to Thessalonica to continue their harassment.

It is amazing how vicious people can be when their power is threatened or when told they are wrong. The messenger becomes the target of slander and downright cruelty.

I have heard that you can prove anything by the Bible by taking things out of context. Barbara Johnson, in her book Daily Splashes of Joy, gives the following humorous illustration.



Rogers

tion. "A lie is an abomination to the Lord...and a very present help in time of trouble."

Live what You Teach

Paul reminds his readers of how hard he worked when he was with them. He worked long hours (probably tent making) so that he would not be a burden to the Thessalonians. He lived a holy, righteous and blameless life among them. He saw his ministry as encouraging, comforting and urging them to live lives worthy of their new calling as children of God.

The world sees how we live our lives and take note to see if we are "walking the talk". Years ago, I was shocked to hear a deacon (not from my church!) repeatedly taking God's name in vain at a local store. This man was active in church, but his testimony in the community was questionable at best.

Teach for Results

How wonderful it is when individuals hear the Word, believe it and respond in a positive way. Paul expresses thanks for the Thessalonians' response to the gospel. Their countrymen ridiculed and per-

secuted them just as Jewish believers were treated.

The Jews responsible for Jesus' death were hostile to Paul and other believers. Throughout Biblical history, God's prophets were rejected and mistreated. Jewish religious men considered themselves exclusively God's chosen people. In fact, they were the chosen people, but they refused to accept that God's salvation also was extended to Gentiles.

How glad we are that salvation is extended to all. In our country today we do not have harsh persecution. However, we may face some discrimination and/or prejudices. We know that there are places in the world where Christians do face persecution. Here we are more likely to see apathy.

Sharing Bible truths with others will promote Christian growth as well as help others. As Christians, it is important to "talk the talk" and to "walk the walk" if we would be effective witnesses.

Rogers is a member of Main Street Church, Hattiesburg.

Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

THE BAPTIST
Record

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if

submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) e-mail, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lit. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items are generally not publishable. Photographs can not be returned. Please do not attach photos with tape or staples.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape-, building-, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

Zoo bails on Creation Museum pact after criticism

CINCINNATI (BP) — A Christmas season partnership between the Cincinnati Zoo and the Creation Museum aimed at boosting tourism has ended days after it was launched, with the zoo pulling out after receiving a significant number of complaints.

As planned, the partnership would have allowed visitors to see both attractions for \$25.95 (one adult admission), a savings of \$9 compared to the normal combined price. It had been in the works for months and was designed as a way to promote the zoo's Festival of Lights and the museum's Bethlehem's Blessings, which features a free live outdoor nativity.

The zoo, though, withdrew from the partnership Dec. 1 before any combo tickets were sold. In a unique twist, the Creation Museum — which opened in 2007 and presents a scientific explanation for the biblical view of creation — says it will offer the full \$9 discount anyway on its adult tickets through Dec. 11.

Some of the complaints asserted that the zoo was partnering with an attraction that promotes pseudo-science. Others said the zoo shouldn't be partnering with a museum that promotes a religious viewpoint of creation. The museum teaches that the universe is thousands, and not millions, of years old.

"They seem like diametrically opposed institutions," James Leach, a Cincinnati radiologist, told The Cincinnati Enquirer. "The Cincinnati Zoo is one of this city's treasures. The Creation Museum is an international laughingstock."

The zoo and the museum — which has had more than 600,000 visitors since it opened in May 2007 — said the partnership was no different than similar ones the zoo has with the Cincinnati Reds and the Newport Aquarium. The \$27 million, 60,000-square-foot Creation Museum is located in Petersburg, Ky., just across the river from Cincinnati. It is operated by Answers in Genesis.

"We are disappointed with the zoo's

decision and its impact on the families and visitors to the region who would have enjoyed taking advantage of this opportunity to make this a truly memorable Christmas," Creation Museum founder and president Ken Ham said in a statement. "Both the Creation Museum and the Cincinnati Zoo have put together spectacular Christmas displays, and we were excited to partner with them to promote these events in a combination package that would have been of great value to the community."

Ham added that he and his family are members of the Cincinnati Zoo and that the museum has and will continue to promote the zoo, which he describes as "excellent," on the museum's website and in printed materials.

"I have learned that the zoo received hundreds of complaints from what appear to be some very intolerant people, and so I understand the zoo's perspective," he said. "Frankly, we are used to this kind of criticism from our opponents, and so being 'expelled' like this is not a huge surprise..."

"It's a pity that intolerant people have pushed for our expulsion simply because of our Christian faith. Some of their comments on blogs reveal great intolerance for anything having to do with Christianity."

Zoo spokesman Chad Yelton told the Enquirer, "When we partner with the Reds, we don't get these kinds of



LIFELIKE CREATURES — Animatronic dinosaurs roar at the Creation Museum, a \$27 million project in northern Kentucky just across the Ohio River from Cincinnati that affirms a biblical view of mankind's beginnings. The Cincinnati Zoo has come under criticism for partnering with the museum under a joint ticket package. (BP photo)

e-mails. It's pretty clear this is more of a distraction."

In essence, the museum is a creationist answer to popular natural history museums. It features roaring animatronic dinosaurs, more than 50 educational video displays, and a special effects theater complete with three screens, vibrating seats, simulated wind, and mist.

In the year and a half since it opened, museum officials have added a two-story, dinosaur-themed Dino Den and outdoor petting zoo, and have expanded the botanical gardens surrounding the museum.

"Anyone who toured the museum on opening weekend or shortly thereafter would be astounded at the number of new and expanded exhibits now on display at the Creation Museum," museum co-founder Mark Looy said in a statement.

The Bethlehem's Blessings display opens Dec. 12. The museum's planetarium (additional charge) will be showing a Christmas Star show.

Editor's note: More information about the Creation Museum is available online at CreationMuseum.org.

Cult materials to be housed, studied at Midwestern Seminary

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP) — When James Walker hears of another person converted to faith in Christ after years of deception in a cult, he rejoices at the news — but if that new believer is eager to discard newsletters and books filled with the false teaching that once entrapped him, Walker is likely to respond, "Not so fast!"

What is reasonably regarded as harmful literature can serve to enlighten those who study Christian apologetics. Former practitioners are just one source of materials that Walker and the staff of Watchman Fellowship acquire to build an extensive library of primary source material.

Over the past 30 years, materials from countless cultic groups that range from the New Age Movement, to the Unification Church have been collected by scouring yard sales, used bookstores and family files.

Because making such materials available to seminary students will help equip future ministers recognize cultic deception and counter it with a Christian witness, Watchman Fellowship in placing part of its collection at Midwestern Seminary in

Kansas City, Mo. "Our institution's interest in the Watchman library stems from our desire to understand and reach cultic enthusiasts with the Gospel," Thor Madsen, Midwestern's academic dean, said.

"We trust that expertise gained from careful research in these materials will serve that end."

Such preparation is essential in a postmodern world in which the desire to find something to believe in remains strong. "We might suppose that as America gives up Christianity, it will default to naturalism, which rejects all forms of religious belief," Madsen said.

"What we actually see, however, is a turning to all sorts of do-it-yourself, garage-band worldviews, prime examples of which are studied by the Watchman Fellowship."

It was the frustration of being inadequately trained to answer the Jehovah's Witnesses who came to his doorstep that motivated Watchman founder David Henke to search for literature on the subject, contacting every author or organization for which he could find an address.

In 1978 he became a full-time missionary to cults. The organization expanded to staff offices in eight states, involving many ministers with Southern Baptist ties.

A fourth-generation Mormon, Walker walked away from serving as a deacon, teacher, and priest in 1976, and later studied theology at Criswell College in Dallas.

Ten years after joining the staff of Watchman Fellowship, he became president in 1994, developing curriculum materials and leading conferences in local churches and theological schools.

"Our goal is to equip the body of Christ for discernment and evangelism, to educate the community to the dangers of religious cults and to evangelize those lost in cultic deception," Walker said.

He advises incorporating two elements for an effective witness to someone trapped in a cult: love and authority. An expression of personal concern and interest in the individual as a person, not just a cult member, communicates that love. Then a Christian relies upon the authority of God's Word,

illuminated by the Holy Spirit. By helping cult members recognize the control being exercised by a person or group and how their faith has been misplaced, they become more open to the Gospel.

Walker combines original cult source materials with witnessing manuals to teach Christians an easy, practical, and effective method of opening the eyes of cult members.

Watchman Fellowship's research library contains more than 35,000 volumes with about 10,000 files on cult-related issues.

Original materials produced by groups such as the Church of Scientology, the New Age movement, Unification Church, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses are among the holdings.

Duplicate copies are being provided to Midwestern Seminary for use by students and other researchers.

"Our library eagerly anticipates the arrival of these new resources and we will find opportunities to share these resources with our students and the community," Midwestern Seminary librarian Craig Kubic said.